



AMBS window

Supporting leaders in all seasons of ministry

Three new programs designed for active and emerging leaders and launched in 2019–20 by AMBS's **Church Leadership Center** are bearing fruit in the lives of participants. The programs were made possible by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Thriving in Ministry initiative in 2018.

"Through these programs, we're seeing pastors become integrated into relationships of support and develop self-awareness, curiosity and intercultural competence," reflected **Julia Schmidt**, MDiv, Program Administrator for the grant. "They're experiencing greater clarity in their roles through honest conversation and feedback."

Transition to Leadership

Transition to Leadership supports new pastors over a period of two years as they enter into ministry following completion of their seminary studies. Through one-on-one mentoring with an experienced pastor, weekend gatherings with peers in the program twice a year, and learning sessions with consultants, the pastors find a supportive structure

and freedom to learn in ways that are suited to their unique settings and experiences. The program is designed for cohorts of five people. Participation in all three grant programs is confidential.

The mentoring relationship is a key component of the program. During the first Weekend Learning Event, the mentor pairs create and share timelines of their life journeys, noting significant experiences and events related to faith development, call and ministry. They also complete a personalized learning covenant for the mentee that focuses on self-assessment, goal setting and growth in six pastoral ministry competency areas. The pairs assess the mentee's progress during the semi-annual gatherings and also meet monthly to discuss ministry formation challenges and opportunities facing the mentee.

Each Weekend Learning Event also includes sessions on intercultural competence, character formation, spiritual disciplines and conflict transformation led by Church Leadership Center consultants **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**, MA,

Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator, and **David B. Miller**, DMin, Teaching Associate of the Church Leadership Center. Worshiping together helps deepen faith and form trusting friendships.

Because the gatherings have taken place online due to COVID-19, planners have worked to create a sense of "retreat" by offering funds for participants to rent a space from which to participate and by sending them a care package (pictured above). (continued on p. 6)

PARTICIPANTS TO DATE

Transition to Leadership: 13 mentor pairs

Ministry Integrity Circles: 18 participants

Leadership Integrity Circles: 4 participants

Represented: 11 U.S. states, 3 Canadian provinces; 4 time zones

Total hours gathered: 90; more than 65 of them on Zoom

Participants who are AMBS alumni: 23

Above: Care package items for Transition to Leadership pastors (Credit: Rachel Denlinger)

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Thriving together with resilience and hope



David Boshart (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision. That's where our mission statement begins. It's been a hard year since COVID-19 came to visit and decided to stay for a while. It's been a year of adaptive change. Yet this challenging time has evoked an amazing spirit of resilience in this learning community that can only be attributed to the power of God at work within us.

That is not to say that things have been stress-free. It has taken extra work and energy from everyone to meet the challenges of this year. We have been "making the road by walking." But we have walked the road together. We have laughed and we have cried our "face-masked way" through this time of isolation, walking together as closely as safe distance allows. We have continued to worship together on Tuesdays outside — all winter long! — and on Fridays online.

Even as we serve our graduate students, we also serve those already in professional leadership roles, considering what they need in order to thrive. Since July 1, 2020, 478 people have participated in our Church Leadership Center's noncredit programs (see p. 1 to learn about three of them). While our

annual Pastors and Leaders event — on the theme of "Thriving Together" — was held on Zoom this year (March 1–4), participants told us it was one of the most engaging and creative Pastors and Leaders event they've attended.

At AMBS, we have received everything we need to thrive with resilience and hope! With gratitude we celebrate the highest enrollment AMBS has had in 10 years (see below and p. 3). We have received strong calendar year-end financial contributions, the strongest we have seen in more than 20 years. We feel God's care for AMBS with the church so generously tending to our needs.

I begin every day at the seminary with an early morning prayer walk through Waltner Hall. As I walk the halls, I pray for wisdom and resilience for our faculty, students, staff and myself. And I pray with gratitude to God for making it possible for this learning community to thrive in our mission to serve the church. At AMBS, we believe that the power of God is more real than the power of evil. One day we will overcome this pandemic. In the meantime, we will continue to thrive together with resilience and hope. Thank you for your strong support of our mission at AMBS!

• —David Boshart, PhD, President

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 A seminary of
Mennonite Church USA and
Mennonite Church Canada

BY THE NUMBERS Academic year 2020–21

Grad students: **128** (highest in 10 years!)
Incoming class size: **28**

Women: **67**
Men: **61**

Countries represented: **12** (Argentina, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Tanzania, United States, Zimbabwe)

Students by faith tradition
Mennonite or Anabaptist-related: **104**
Other-than-Anabaptist Christian traditions: **24**

Students by program

Master of Divinity Campus: **22**
Master of Divinity Connect (distance education option): **27**
MA in Christian Formation: **8**
MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism: **17**
MA: Theology and Peace Studies: **12**
Graduate Certificate: **6**
Guest or visiting students: **36**

Campus residents

Current students: **18**
Family members of students: **8**
Employees/volunteers: **4**

Giving thanks for our students!

AMBS reported a total enrollment of 152 students for 2020–21, a 36-percent increase from 112 students in 2019 and its highest enrollment number since the 2010–11 academic year. Of these, 128 are graduate students and 24 are participants in the nondegree **Journey Missional Leadership Development Program** of the seminary's Church Leadership Center. These figures are from the close of registration on Sept. 14, 2020.

Graduate programs

Of the **128 students** taking graduate-level courses, **92 are enrolled in degree or certificate programs** (representing a 19-percent increase from 2019), and 36 are guest students or auditors (more than three times the number from 2019). **Daniel Grimes**, MPA, Vice President for Advancement and Enrollment, noted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most campus courses have been meeting via videoconference. Also, several courses specifically addressing pandemic-related topics, as well as new courses taught by new faculty members, have drawn more registrants — including alumni.

The 2020–21 graduate student body represents **12 countries**, with 82 students coming from the U.S., nine from Canada (the highest number in 10 years), and 37 from outside of the U.S. and Canada. Assistant Dean and Registrar **Scott Janzen**, MDiv, noted that this is the highest number

of international students at AMBS on record in the past 30 years of available data.

Fifteen of the seminary's 26 Ethiopian students are enrolled in the seminary's fully online **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** program through a partnership with Miserete Kristos College in Ethiopia. Due to travel and student visa restrictions, six new international students opted to take courses online, and more than 20 international students had to postpone enrollment.

"While we're disappointed that so many of our new international graduate students had to defer enrollment because of student visa and travel restrictions, we're thrilled that our enrollment figures still exceeded our enrollment goals," said Grimes. "This affirms the need for and relevance of the theological and spiritual formation that AMBS offers."

The flexibility that online study offers continues to draw students; Janzen noted that the number of students taking an online course jumped more than 40 percent over the prior year — even without counting campus-based courses meeting remotely due to COVID-19. Additionally, AMBS's distance-friendly **MDiv Connect** program has more students than its on-campus counterpart, the **MDiv Campus** program, for the second year.

Journey Missional Leadership Development Program

Of the **24 Journey program participants** — whose number held steady from 2019 — 17 are from the U.S., one is from Canada, and six are from two countries in Southeast Asia (locations not shared for security reasons). Eight of the participants in the distance-friendly program are women, and 16 are men. The U.S. and Canadian participants reside in California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Ontario.

Traditions represented by participants include Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, Evana and the Bible Church. • —Annette Brill Bergstresser

Below: Members of the AMBS learning community leave worship at the Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount during orientation week in August 2019.
(Credit: Peter Ringenberg)



New online conversations connect alumni and faculty

To help AMBS alumni get to know current faculty members and learn about what's happening at the seminary, last October AMBS launched a series of free monthly videoconference conversations with selected AMBS Teaching and Administrative Faculty members as an exclusive benefit for AMBS alumni.

These hourlong **"Third Thursdays"** webinars consist of a half-hour interview facilitated by Alumni Director **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989), followed by time for Q&A.

"We've been thrilled by the strong interest in these webinars," Johnson said. "Alumni have started sending me their questions for the speaker ahead of time, and several have initiated contact with our faculty directly. One told me he was so energized listening to our faculty that he wished he could start seminary again because he knew he 'would love learning with this generation' as much as he loved his own professors."

The virtual conversations, which are held on the third Thursday of each month from 12 to 1 p.m. Eastern Time, are only open to AMBS alumni at this time; registration is required. Recordings of the webinars are available for anyone to view for free online.

To learn more or register, and to view recordings of past webinars, see ambs.edu/thirdthursdays.

Upcoming sessions

- **April 15: Jamie Pitts**, PhD, Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies; Director, Institute of Mennonite Studies; Editor, *Anabaptist Witness*
- **May 20: Janna Hunter-Bowman**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Peace Studies and Christian Social Ethics

Past sessions

Recordings available online:

- **October: Drew Strait**, PhD, Assistant Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins
- **November: Nekeisha Alayna Alexis** (MATS 2008), Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism coordinator
- **December: David Boshart**, PhD, President
- **January: Susannah Larry**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies
- **February: Leah Thomas**, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care and Contextual Education
- **March: Beverly Lapp**, EdD, Vice President and Academic Dean

Learn about experiences that have shaped these interviewees, pivotal moments in their faith development, subjects they are passionate about, their dreams for AMBS, and what they most want to ask AMBS alumni! •



Janeen Bertsche Johnson (Credit: Lynne Zehr)

Virtual alumni reunions coming!

The following Zoom reunions will be organized by decade, and you can attend whichever gatherings fit your years of study at AMBS. We'll have breakout groups within each gathering so that you can connect with your classmates. Reunions will take place online on **Thursdays at 7 p.m. Eastern Time**:

- **1950s and 1960s:** April 15
- **1970s:** April 29
- **1980s:** May 6
- **1990s:** May 13
- **2000–09:** May 27
- **2010–20:** June 3

In addition, a Zoom reunion for **alumni from any time period** will be held June 10 at 12 p.m. ET. See: ambs.edu/reunions • —Janeen Bertsche Johnson, MDiv, Alumni Director

Call for nominations

We welcome nominations of AMBS graduates for the **2021 Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition**, which honors alumni with an outstanding record of faithful ministry and service. We will select two recipients: one who has served in pastoral ministry and one who has served in another type of ministry (peace work, academics, mission work, etc.). The criteria for these awards and a list of recipients since AMBS began awarding the honor in 2004 can be viewed at ambs.edu/alumni/ministry-service-recognition.

Please send nominations to bjjohnson@ambs.edu as soon as possible. Along with the name of the person(s) you are nominating, please describe their ministries and their impact on others. Thank you!

Official transcripts now available electronically

AMBS students and alumni can now request to have official transcripts sent electronically to a third party — for free! Sending transcripts electronically is the Registrar's preferred method for issuing official transcripts since they are transferred instantly and are securely encrypted. Please note that electronic official transcripts cannot be sent to students or alumni directly, however — only to third parties such as schools or potential employers. Official paper transcripts can still be requested (to be sent to the student or a third party), and current students can still print unofficial transcripts via Populi at any time for free. See: ambs.edu/transcripts

Why I love working at AMBS

When I joined the AMBS Development Team three years ago, it was quite a shift from my previous ministry involvements. I was rather nervous and hoped this decision was not a mistake. Looking back, I am extremely grateful for these three years!

In my work, I get to hear the stories of so many people who share their heartfelt passion for AMBS's mission of educating leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Alumni often tell me about the positive impact that their formation at AMBS has had on their lives and ministry. I am honored when people feel free to express their concerns about the church and AMBS.

I have also had the privilege of simply listening to the life stories of these dear friends of AMBS — times of joy as well as painful heartache. One person with terminal cancer reflected with gratitude on the life she has lived. Another, suffering the effects of Parkinson's Disease and barely able to talk, vigorously shook my hand with gratitude for the ministry of AMBS.

In all of these times I recognize that I am on holy ground. I have been so inspired by those who support our ministry. It is truly a blessing to be a part of AMBS in this way!

Another thing I have come to learn in my work is how much we at AMBS rely on our Annual Fund to provide creative learning environments, meaningful worship opportunities, creation-friendly practices, and all the support

services needed to help our students learn, grow and thrive. We count on endowment earnings for annual revenue to carry out our mission without raising tuition costs for our students.

We also depend on people who have generously included AMBS in their estate plans. For many, this will be their largest financial contribution to AMBS. Only about half of the adult population in Canada and the United States has set up a will. And only a small fraction of those people have included a nonprofit organization as a beneficiary.

If you have already included AMBS in your estate plans ... THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

If you have not, I invite you to consider including AMBS in your plans, whether as a bequest in a will or trust, or as a designated beneficiary of your retirement plan or life insurance policy. Your support will make a tangible difference in the lives of future leaders.

For those of you I've had the pleasure of meeting, thank you for entrusting me with your stories. We truly appreciate all of you who make an impact on AMBS — both now and in the future! •

—Bob Yoder, DMin, CFRM,
Director of Development



Above: Bob Yoder (Credit: Jason Bryant)

Below: Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics, chats with Jamie Pitts, PhD, Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies, following AMBS's commencement service in August 2020. (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)





AMBS creates worship materials for April 11

Recognizing the toll that COVID-19 has had on pastors and worship planners over the last year, members of the AMBS community have prepared worship materials for congregational use for the Sunday after Easter (April 11). The resources, which are based on the John 20:19-31 lectionary reading, include a prelude, a call to worship, an opening prayer, two hymns, a Scripture presentation, a sermon, two student testimonies, an Amharic song, intercessory prayer, the Lord's Prayer in three languages, a benediction and a postlude.

Elements of a separate worship service based on the story of Jesus in the temple as a boy (Luke 2:41-52) are also

available for congregational use. These materials were originally made available for Epiphany, but the message of the sermon is broadly focused on the topic of faith formation, so they could be used at any time.

These free resources are available at ambs.edu/worship-materials. We invite congregations to use whichever ones are useful to you and to give pastors and worship leaders a break from preparing! We'd love to hear from you if you decide to use any of the resources; email me at bjjohnson@ambs.edu. •

—Janeen Bertsche Johnson, MDiv,
Director of Campus Ministries,
Development Associate

Above (l. to r.): AMBS students Sibonokuhle Ncube of Zimbabwe, Marcos Acosta of Argentina, Salomé Haldemann of France, Andios Santoso of Indonesia and Quinn Brenneke of the United States sing "Jesus, we are here" in a video that is part of the worship materials.

Thank you to our board members!

The AMBS Board of Directors includes representatives from the seminary's sponsoring denominations, Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, and other AMBS constituencies. We recognize and thank our board members who concluded their terms in 2019–20 for contributing their time, experience and expertise:

- **Meghan Larissa Good** of Glendale, Arizona (July 2012 – June 2020)
- **Byron Pellecer** of Harrisonburg, Virginia (July 2016 – June 2020)
- **Rod Roberson** of Elkhart, Indiana (July 2016 – December 2019)

We welcome and thank the following new members, who began terms of service in 2020–21:

- **John Daniels** of Sarasota, Florida (July 2020 – June 2024)
- **Gilberto Pérez, Jr.** of Goshen, Indiana (July 2020 – June 2024)
- **Rachel Siemens** of Carman, Manitoba (December 2020 – January 2025)
- **Mandy Yoder** of Goshen, Indiana (July 2020 – June 2024)

A list of board members is available at ambs.edu/about/board-of-directors.

Supporting pastors (cont'd. from p. 1)

Participants expressed affirmation for the gatherings and learning sessions.

"Nekeisha was so inviting of our perspectives and offered such a calm presence in the midst of presenting hard stuff — with no judgment," one participant wrote of an ICUR session.

Ministry Integrity Circles

Ministry Integrity Circles bring together groups of six pastoral leaders four times over one year for reflection to help them reimagine their call to ministry during a time of transition. Before each gathering, participants prepare a Ministry Reflection Report on a specific ministry incident or experience to share with the circle and consultants Alexis and Miller. Through this sharing, pastors gain greater awareness of barriers that stand between them and wholeness; insight into situations of brokenness; and clarity about how to move toward healing and restoration.

"I was surprised at how useful the written reflection was for me," one participant wrote. "It is also helpful just to be in the presence of others who are not saying, 'Everything is fine,' and are working with real issues of ministry."

Leadership Integrity Circles

Leadership Integrity Circles bring together groups of four to six experienced organizational leaders from any sector who desire to grow in their vocation as wise and effective leaders deeply shaped by their faith commitments. With the guidance of two seasoned consultants

— **Betty Pries**, PhD, and **Rick Stiffney**, PhD — participants learn through self-reflection, peer support, conversation, reading and spiritual practices. Three times in a year, they gather to share specific leadership challenges and to grow in spiritual skills and theological thinking to accompany more technical, managerial and organizational skills.

"I found the conversations about how to solve 'either/or' problems by 'both/and' thinking very helpful," reflected one participant. "It seems I put out and recognize a lot of fires these days and have not been taking the time to sit and wrestle. Thank you." •

—Annette Brill Bergstresser

Faculty and staff transitions

The AMBS learning community bid farewell to two employees and welcomed several new employees in the winter of 2020–21. Some teams also reallocated responsibilities as employees shifted into different roles to optimize the use of their gifts and strengthen the seminary's service to its constituents.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM



Nekeisha Alayna Alexis

Nekeisha Alayna Alexis's role as Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator was expanded, with approximately one-third of her role devoted to internal/institutional ICUR leadership and assessment and two-thirds to external consulting through AMBS's Church Leadership Center. Alexis (MATS 2008) has served as ICUR coordinator since 2014. In February, she concluded her role as Graphic Designer and Website Specialist, which she has held since 2007.



Rachel Denlinger began Jan. 4 as half-time Graphic Designer and Marketing Specialist. Denlinger most recently served for six years as Associate Graphic Designer for 1st Source Bank in South Bend. She also has been a freelance graphic designer since 2014 and served as Communications Coordinator for Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in Goshen, Indiana, for two years. Denlinger will also be responsible for communicating about Church Leadership Center events and programs.



Ben Parker Sutter, who has served as Digital Marketing Manager and Church Leadership Center Marketing Coordinator since July 2018, increased his time as Digital Marketing Manager on Jan. 1. His responsibilities now include managing the seminary's social media accounts, maintaining the website and overseeing digital analytics and strategy. A current

student in AMBS's MA: Theology and Global Anabaptism degree program, Parker Sutter has a background in communications with a focus on video and online marketing.

Continuing team members include Marketing and Communications Director **Melissa Troyer** and Communications Manager **Annette Brill Bergstresser**.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Tony Hartman, MBA, concluded his role as Advancement Associate in November 2020 after having served since July 2016. While at AMBS, he also completed a Master of Business Administration through Goshen College. He has moved into a sales position with a local heating, ventilation and air conditioning company.

"Tony was able to connect well with individual donors and communicate how AMBS was serving the church," said **Daniel Grimes**, MPA, Vice President for Advancement and Enrollment. "His education in pastoral ministry and organizational management and his experience in education served him well in his role. We also appreciated how Tony applied current learnings from his collaborative MBA program to his role."

Bob Yoder, DMin, CFRM (see p. 5), began a new full-time role as Director of Development on Jan. 1. Yoder (MDiv 2001) worked for 17 years in ministry with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, Central District Conference and Goshen College before returning to AMBS in January 2018 as an Advancement Associate. In 2020, he completed a Certificate in Fund Raising Management at the Lilly School of Philanthropy of Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis.



Doug Amstutz (MDiv 1996) began Jan. 1 as half-time Development Associate for Canada. Amstutz, who has served as a pastor for 25 years, also will continue to pastor at Erie View Mennonite Church in Port Rowan, Ontario. He has been a service worker

in Egypt with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and he and his wife, Wanda, were country representatives for Ethiopia with MCC.



Randy Detweiler (MDiv 2007) began Feb. 1 as a full-time Development Associate. He has served as a pastor in three congregations over the last

30 years, most recently at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Indiana. He is a member of the board of Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, and also has served in jail ministry and in various leadership capacities with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.

Continuing team members include Grimes; Development Associate **Janeen Bertsche Johnson** (MDiv 1989); and Data Services Manager **Aaron Yost**.

HUMAN RESOURCES



Barb Gamble retired from her part-time role as Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll in February. She began in February 2008.

"Barb was experienced and knowledgeable about all things HR," said **Ron Ringenber**, MBA, MS, Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer. "She brought warmth and compassion to her role, caring deeply about all the people with whom she worked. We will miss her outgoing, positive presence, her good humor and the joy she brought to our learning community."



Steve Norton is taking on the part-time role of Assistant Director of Human Resources and Payroll in addition to his part-time role as Program Assistant for the Thriving in Ministry Grant, which he began in September 2020. Norton spent 14 years in church planting in Germany and was co-pastor of Goshen City Church of the Brethren for eight years. He also helped establish and manage the Elkhart Rise 'n Roll Bakery. • —Annette Brill Bergstresser



MDiv student Anna Ressler of Ohio (Credit: Peter Ringenberg)

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— **Jamie Pitts**, PhD,
Associate Professor of Anabaptist Studies

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UPCOMING OFFERINGS

Anabaptist Short Course

Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication, April 14 – May 25. Join **Betty Pries**, PhD, to explore the possibilities and pitfalls of courageously engaging differences within congregational life in this six-week online noncredit course.

ambs.edu/shortcourses

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

This two-and-a-half-year nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. People from any tradition are welcome to apply!

ambs.edu/journey

Spiritual Direction Seminars

Prepare for a ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program.

ambs.edu/seminars

Invite AMBS

Interested in trauma-informed caregiving? Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism consultations? Workshops on leadership for God’s reconciling mission in today’s world? Engage these offerings and more with Invite AMBS, which provides unique

opportunities to have AMBS faculty and staff interact with you via videoconference. Schedule one of our speakers or ask for another faculty member to share with you! ambs.edu/invite

!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth

Students in grades 10–12 can explore ministry and theology, grow in spiritual practices and listen for God’s call through a summer congregational internship and a Group Experience (at AMBS in 2021 and Mennonite World Conference in 2022). Participants can participate in both and receive a \$1,000 stipend each year. Scholarships are available. Tap a shoulder!

ambs.edu/explore

New scholarships available!

We offer generous need-based financial aid, church matching grants and scholarships, including three new merit-based scholarships for new graduate students from the U.S. or Canada: an **Ecumenical Student Scholarship**, **Multicultural Church Scholarship** and **MDiv Connect Student Scholarship**. Recipients can study at a distance or on campus. ambs.edu/grow

Take an Intensive Term course!

Three-credit courses beginning in May:

- Christian Leadership in the 21st Century
- Ethics and Care: Living and Dying with Purpose
- Practicing and Embodying Nonviolence
- Psalms
- The Spirit World and the Global Church

Some courses may be audited, and some are available in distance format. Nonadmitted students get 50 percent off their first course for credit!

ambs.edu/onecourse

Intensive Term course

Decolonization and Discipleship:

June 14–25. This three-credit-hour course will explore the spiritual, ecological and sociopolitical dimensions of decolonization as a process of inner and outer transformation. Students will learn about ongoing impacts of settler colonialism under the Doctrine of [Christian] Discovery and will consider reparative responses in light of Jesus’ call to Jubilee justice. This course will meet in person using safe protocols.

ambs.edu/trailofdeath